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Unedited transcript

Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

437th Meeting
Wednesday, 4 June 1997, 3 p.m.
Vienna

Chairman: Mr. RAO (India)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

The CHAIRMAN: I now declare open the 437th meeting of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

This afternoon we will continue and conclude our consideration of agenda item 6, "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes". We will also continue our joint consideration of items 7 and 9, "Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee" and "Implementation of the Recommendations of UNISPACE 82, as well as preparations by the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Third UNISPACE Conference".

Time permitting, and in order to make the best possible use of the conference facilities made available to us, we will also begin our consideration of agenda item 8, "Report of the Legal Subcommittee". As we appear to be working very efficiently thanks to the cooperation of all delegations, I would request all delegates to be prepared to speak on any and all items! In this way, once our consideration of one item is complete, we can move on to a new item. I therefore urge all delegations wishing to speak on these agenda items to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Tomorrow we will consider our joint consideration of agenda items 7 and 9, and we will continue our consideration of agenda item 8.

Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes (cont.)

The CHAIRMAN: The first speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of India.

Mr. M. NAIR (India): My delegation believes that efforts to further explore the ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes should be continued. The Committee has considered this item on a priority basis for several years, but the progress has been slow.

The subject is a complex one, and there are still many divergent views which emerge in discussions within the Committee on this subject. Some progress has nevertheless been achieved. There is a common understanding that the strengthening of international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space is an effective way to maintain outer space for peaceful purposes. There is also broad agreement that COPUOS has a vital role to play in ensuring that outer space continues to be used for peaceful purposes, through its work in the scientific, technical and legal fields, and the Committee's role in this respect should be strengthened.

As concerns strengthening of international cooperation, the Committee has both a direct and a catalytic role to play. Its direct role concerns work on development of international space law and encouraging adherence of Member States to the relevant treaties. COPUOS also plays a major role in increasing international cooperation through, inter alia, its work in the scientific and technical fields. Through promoting a better understanding of the scientific and technical aspects of the problem of space debris, the Committee can help strengthen international cooperation. Increased transparency and exchange of information on the global space environment would help considerably in this endeavour.

The declaration on outer space benefits, recently adopted by the General Assembly, is another example of the success of the Committee's work in developing consensus at the international level on cooperation in the use of outer space. The Programme on Space

Applications has promoted the peaceful uses of outer space, in particular for the benefit of the developing countries. The Programme has triggered greater international cooperation in this field.

Exchange of information through the work of the Committee, and among its members and affiliated international organizations, plays an important indirect role in strengthening activities in the field of international cooperation. The results can be seen in the form of joint missions, sharing of scientific data, and training and educational activities. All of these demonstrate the importance accorded to maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes.

The Committee can make a major contribution in this important field. It should continue to focus and enhance efforts on, firstly, maintaining a clean space environment; secondly, on continuing to develop and encourage a legal framework for effective coordination among States, taking into account new developments and applications in the peaceful uses of outer space; and lastly, on promoting greater cooperation among and between States.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Indonesia.

Mr. H. WIRYOSUMARTO (Indonesia): My delegation is pleased to note that in resolution 51/123, paragraph 35, the General Assembly requested the Committee to continue to consider ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes on a priority basis. This emphasizes the strong commitment of the international community, as well as a firm intention to strengthen international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space.

My delegation reiterates its position that, in order to ensure the peaceful uses of outer space, COPUOS must explore the possibility of establishing a coordinating relationship with the Conference on Disarmament. Such a relationship is vital for the exchange of information between these two bodies. Indonesia believes that the Committee would be better placed to conduct its deliberations on this subject if it were kept fully informed on developments in the Conference on Disarmament.

Through the work of the Legal Subcommittee, my delegation is of the view that the Committee should continue to explore and develop an international instrument aimed at strengthening international law in outer space. This would help to ensure the peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of mankind.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any other delegations wishing to speak under this item now, or later? I see none. We have therefore concluded our consideration of agenda item 6.

Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee on the work of its thirty-fourth session (cont.)

Implementation of the Recommendations of UNISPACE 82, as well as Preparations by the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Third UNISPACE Conference (cont.)

The CHAIRMAN: We will now continue our discussion on agenda items 7 and 9. Before doing so, I would like to give the floor to the Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, who will make a brief statement on UNISPACE III.

Mr. N. JASENTULIYANA (Director, Office for Outer Space Affairs; Deputy Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna): As the Preparatory Committee is now considering UNISPACE III, I felt it would be useful to give some additional information in this respect. This information will necessarily be reflected in the report of the Committee in order to proceed with the respective work over the coming months. We are planning for the Conference in good time, but in order to make the best possible preparations we need to take stock of certain more substantial items for inclusion in the report.

Firstly, I will briefly recall some of the items I mentioned in my opening statement. The inter-agency meeting which took place last week was attended by representatives of United Nations bodies, regional commissions and specialized agencies, including all those who are involved in space activities. The meeting reviewed the work of UNISPACE III, as recommended by the Advisory Committee; we invited them to participate and they have agreed to do so. They will discuss and review all the details at headquarters, and following this meeting of the Preparatory Committee, it is our intention to formally invite these agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations involved in activities in space and its applications to participate in the preparatory phase of the Conference.

As concerns non-governmental organizations, those we have in mind are the ones having observer status in the Committee. The same applies to intergovernmental organizations; there may however be a few of them who are not observers in the Committee but who are nevertheless involved in space activities. We will be

asking them for their suggestions as to exactly how they would like to participate.

As discussed at the inter-agency meeting, there are several areas where such participation could be of assistance. One is the question of background papers detailing the work carried out by each particular organization. They might also help the Secretariat to prepare background papers for the Conference itself. Participation in the workshops which will form part of the Conference is yet another area of possible assistance, as well as participation in the exhibit which we will have at the Conference. Immediately following this meeting, the Secretariat intends to issue these invitations and we will extract the salient points from the replies received.

At the next meeting of the Advisory Committee we will propose a suggested format for the Conference, and will bring to its attention the proposals put forward by those organizations for both the preparatory phase and the Conference itself.

I would draw your attention to the recommendations of the inter-agency meeting. It was felt that an overall theme should be selected for UNISPACE III, as this would give a focus to the exhibition as well as to the papers to be presented. The Advisory Committee had prepared objectives and a detailed agenda but had not selected a suitable theme. A suggestion put forward by the inter-agency meeting was "Space benefits for humanity in the twenty-first century". This suggestion emanated from their reading of what the Advisory Committee had agreed in the provisional agenda, and I would like to draw this to the attention of all delegations for further consideration.

The inter-agency meeting agreed that two specific aspects could be emphasized in the agenda of the Conference. The first is enhancing the use of space-based information and communications technology in order to strengthen the operational global observing systems, as it was felt important that these should become more effective in the twenty-first century. The second is already addressed to an extent in the agenda: the wider use of space technologies in the prevention and mitigation of the effects of natural and technological disasters. Special emphasis should be placed on this equally important area.

Mr. Abiodun and myself have already briefed you on the regional preparatory meetings which are foreseen. We hope to hold one in each region — Africa, Asia, Latin America — and we are waiting for governments to respond as concerns hosting these conferences. With the agreement of GRULAC, the Government of Chile has proposed that the regional conference for the Latin American region should be held in Chile. Mention has been made of the Asian conference being held in Malaysia, but we are still awaiting further information, and likewise for the African region. These regional conferences will take place in 1998 and 1999, prior to UNISPACE III, and recommendations made by them will be incorporated in the draft report of the Conference.

The regional preparatory conferences will be focused around the agenda of the Conference, and will follow the standard United Nations format for such conferences. In preparing background papers, you have before you document A/AC.105/1997/CRP.4; we have taken the agenda as a base and suggested a dozen or so background papers which could be prepared for the Conference. In addition, international organizations may wish to submit background papers and this subject will be mentioned when these organizations are contacted.

I already mentioned in my statement that the financial aspects relating to the Conference will be kept within existing constraints as far as is possible. At this point in time, this poses no major problem, provided the budget for the Committee in the next biennium remains the same as in the current biennium. I also told you that the Conference will be held in the Austria Center, but we will use the facilities of the VIC to the greatest extent possible in order to minimize costs.

As concerns the space exhibition, this will be held in the new exhibition hall due to open shortly before the Conference is scheduled to take place. That hall will have a gross exhibition space of some 7,000 m^2, including the working areas, corridors, etc., and the actual exhibition area should amount to some 5,000 m^2. The IAF Congress recently held in Beijing had an exhibition area of around 5,000 m^2, and thus the same kind of format is envisaged. In addition, we can always offer small exhibitions in the corridor areas in the VIC. The new exhibition hall will be on two levels, with a direct entrance to the VIC.

The Government of Austria is not responsible for any costs in connection with a commercial exhibition; therefore, it will be organized on a purely commercial basis. The Austrian Government traditionally covers certain expenses of non-commercial exhibitions, and we are at present negotiating possibilities in this respect with the Austria Center.

For information purposes, the large exhibits can range from 60 to 100 m^2, small exhibits can be some 10 m^2, and the average exhibits use some 20 m^2.

Turning now to areas which I have not yet touched upon but which merit our attention, the first is the preparation of the draft report of the Conference. As is usual practice for United Nations conferences, the Secretariat will prepare the draft report. We cannot formally make a start on this until the General Assembly adopts the resolution on UNISPACE III at its next session this autumn, and we therefore have to work within this constraint. That being understood, we would suggest a two-stage procedure: the first is that immediately following this meeting, we will contact the Member States of COPUOS and ask for their ideas on what should be included in the draft report of the Conference; and after the resolution is adopted, we can broaden the scope to include all United Nations Member States.

States would be asked to submit their comments by, say, November/December this year; we wish to ensure that all countries have sufficient time in which to formulate their contributions. The Secretariat would then prepare elements for inclusion in the draft report, to be considered by the Advisory Committee in February 1998. We plan to include as much as input as possible from Member States, and it would be particularly helpful if all States could forward their input by the deadline just mentioned. Ideas put forward by international organizations would also be included.

By February 1998, the Advisory Committee would also have before it a summary of submissions by all Member States of COPUOS, so that the draft report could be discussed in greater depth and ideas could be put forward.

Once the resolution has been adopted by the General Assembly (which should be in November/ December this year), the Secretariat would send a letter to all other States not members of COPUOS requesting their views, but setting them a deadline to forward those views of, say, April 1998. This means that at its February meeting, the Advisory Committee could examine the input from Member States of COPUOS and put forward some ideas for inclusion in the draft report. On the basis of that input, the Secretariat would then prepare the first draft of the full text of the report, and by that time we would be in a position to take into account any ideas put forward by other States not members of COPUOS. The first draft of the full report would therefore be available for the Preparatory Committee at its meeting in June 1998.

The Preparatory Committee would give detailed consideration to the draft report and formulate some ideas and suggestions. The draft report would then be extensively revised by the Secretariat, in the format proposed by the Preparatory Committee, by the end of 1998. This report would then be circulated to Member States in good time before the meeting of the Advisory Committee in 1999. At its meeting in February 1999, the Advisory Committee would be in a position to negotiate the final text of the report. In 1999, we will have an opportunity at the brief meeting of COPUOS prior to UNISPACE III to make any last-minute changes to the report before it is submitted to the Conference.

This is the process which the Secretariat foresees; we will however have to take into account certain technical difficulties which may arise, but if the Committee is agreeable to this workplan, it can be reflected in the Preparatory Committee's report this year.

National papers will also be put forward, which will review the work of the national space programmes and individual ideas contained therein. They will be submitted direct to the Conference by Member States and the Secretariat will set deadlines in due course for submission of a short extract (one or two pages), which the Secretariat will then have translated into all the official United Nations languages and circulated at the Conference. The national papers themselves will be circulated in their original language only.

I have outlined the format for the background papers, national papers and the draft report. As concerns the schedule of meetings, it has already been agreed that the meetings scheduled for 1999 should not exceed 16 days. As indicated in the meetings schedule recommended by the Advisory Committee, the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee will meet for a total of eight days. This period will be a crucial one, where much of the work concerning the report will be finalized. The Legal Subcommittee will meet for five days; the advantage being that the two meetings of the Subcommittee will be scheduled back-to-back in February/March. This means that should further negotiations be necessary in the Advisory Committee, there is an opportunity to use some of the Legal Subcommittee's time for this purpose. I am quite confident that this will allow us sufficient time to deal with the report.

A maximum of three days remains in 1999 for a short meeting of COPUOS prior to the Conference, which will review, finalize and adopt the reports of the two Subcommittees and finalize the draft report for the Conference. The exact schedule for 1999 as agreed in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee will not be confirmed until 1998, and in particular it has still to be decided whether the short session of COPUOS should be

immediately prior to the Conference or at some other point. A decision on this will be taken next year in light of the progress achieved during next year's meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

UNISPACE III will take place from 19 to 30 July 1999. The substantive work of the Conference will be conducted by two or three committees. The functions of these bodies are set out in document A/AC.105/662, paragraphs 45-48. In view of the limited resources available, only two bodies will meet at any given time. Therefore, if we have a maximum of a plenary meeting and three subsidiary committees, out of this total of four only two can meet at the same time. No other meetings will be held during the opening and closing plenary meetings of the Conference.

The indicative schedule is as follows. Day one to day three will be plenary meetings of the Conference, with the adoption of the agenda, establishment of committees or working groups, general statements, etc. The committees will meet from day one to day nine, as will the Working Group of the Whole, as necessary. The last two days will be reserved for the plenary meetings and adoption of the report.

At the 1998 meeting of the Advisory Committee, it may be necessary to formalize a more detailed schedule for the Conference, and once so instructed the Secretariat will be able to propose a more definitive format for this schedule.

If delegations have any further question, I will be happy to answer them. In the meantime I hope that all delegates will give some thought to what I have just outlined so that the Secretariat has as much input as possible for the preparatory work for the Conference.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your very useful outline of the preparatory work to be undertaken leading up to UNISPACE III. Before proceeding with our discussion of agenda items 7 and 9, I would like to ask if there are any delegations wishing to seek further clarification on this important issue. I give the floor to the distinguished representative of Ecuador.

Mr. L. ARIZAGA (Ecuador) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Firstly, I would like to thank Dr. Jasentuliyana for his introductory statement. I think he has given us a very comprehensive presentation, covering the full range of subjects to be addressed by the Conference.

I would like some additional clarification on certain points. Document A/AC.105/1997/CRP.4, which has been circulated today, refers to the background documentation to be prepared by the Secretariat for the Conference. My delegation has studied this document and agrees with the list of topics set out in this document. However, we would like some clarification as concerns the subject of international cooperation.

In the discussions which took place in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, we identified what will be agenda item 7 of the Conference, "Promotion of international cooperation". In the explanatory remarks it is stated that within the context of UNISPACE III, consideration of existing mechanisms would take place, as well as consideration of new mechanisms for international cooperation in space-related activities, and the study of ways and means to intensify coordination and cooperation between Member States of the United Nations system. Another topic mentioned is of particular relevance in terms of the Group of 77: the current status of outer space law and how the Conference could help in promoting the treaties and principles relating to outer space.

My delegation would like to know why international cooperation has not been included as a separate topic. We have read the explanation, which states that international cooperation will be mentioned under each individual item, but we think it advisable to have a separate item on this subject in view of its undeniable relevance for all States.

Secondly, my delegation would like to know what procedure will be followed concerning information sent out to Member States. We understand that in the first instance, members of COPUOS will receive an invitation to submit contributions, followed at a later stage by the same invitation to States not members of COPUOS. My delegation therefore wonders whether it would not be more straightforward to send all the invitations at the same time so that comprehensive data can be forwarded to the Secretariat in good time for its inclusion in the draft report.

We appreciate that certain difficulties arise because the General Assembly has yet to formally adopt the resolution concerning UNISPACE III. Therefore an explanation could perhaps be given to States not members of COPUOS to this effect. If we follow the format just proposed, the Secretariat will have to prepare a document on the basis of information received from, firstly, members of COPUOS; secondly, from non-members of the Committee; and then thirdly, other organizations involved in the preparatory phase. This would seem to be generating additional work which could be avoided, and my delegation feels it would be

easier to issue invitations simultaneously to all States and organizations involved.

Finally, my delegation had understood that there would be two, and not three, committees meeting during UNISPACE III. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had decided there would be a plenary meeting and two additional committees, and no more than two meetings at any given time. We have no objection to a third committee if necessary, but we would like further information on what the mandate of that committee would be.

These are our initial queries on the Conference. My delegation would like to thank Dr. Jasentuliyana for his comprehensive explanatory comments.

The CHAIRMAN: I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Brazil.

Mr. S. CALDAS MERCADOR (Brazil): My delegation would like to thank Dr. Jasentuliyana for his clarification on the preparations for UNISPACE III. Brazil looks forward to playing an active role in the preparatory phase for the Conference.

Concerning the invitation to all United Nations Member States, Brazil feels that all countries from the Latin American and Caribbean region should be invited. As we also have a special affinity with five Portuguese-speaking African countries, we would emphasize the need to invite them also, although not all of them are members of COPUOS.

The number of committees to meet during UNISPACE III is going to be either two or three. My delegation would like to know if the Committee of the Whole is included in this figure. We would also like to know exactly when the Advisory Committee will begin its work, as we did not quite grasp the exact time-table referred to.

The CHAIRMAN: My understanding was that, as far as invitations to Member States are concerned, all members of the United Nations will be invited. However, due to the technical problem which arises from the General Assembly not having formally adopted the resolution, these invitations would be sent out in two phases, as outlined by Dr. Jasentuliyana.

Are there any further queries from delegations? There appear to be none: Dr. Jasentuliyana has obviously been extremely lucid in his statement! I will now give him the floor to answer those questions from the distinguished representatives of Ecuador and Brazil.

Mr. N. JASENTULIYANA (Director, Office for Outer Space Affairs; Deputy Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna): On the question of background papers, the Secretariat has given this matter much consideration. Our conclusions were that we would not be able to prepare the necessary papers without taking account of two important aspects of the agenda. These are economic and social benefits, and the interrelationship between this subject and international cooperation.

It was on this basis that the Secretariat felt these two important issues — economic and social benefits, and international cooperation — should be addressed in each individual paper. However, what we decided is not definitive, and therefore if necessary we can introduce a separate paper which addresses them specifically. I am not concerned if we maintain the ten papers listed in document A/AC.105/1997/CRP.4, because note 2 of that document refers to a review of the work of the international organizations, which basically means international cooperation, and this will be contained in a separate document.

The same applies to the question of space law: what is contained in the agenda is a review of the status of space law, which the Secretariat felt would be better addressed in the review document. Other-wise some duplication might take place, as that document already covers the review. The revision of the document entitled "Space activities of the United Nations and international organizations" does in fact deal with international cooperation, and contains a substantial section on space law. The Secretariat is open to any suggestions you may have, but I hope this is a suitable explanation, and I can assure delegates that we have paid particular attention to both international cooperation and economic and social benefits. It was thus to enhance their importance that we felt they should be addressed under each individual item.

In reply to the question of the distinguished representative of Brazil, I would like to clarify that the Conference is open to all Member States of the United Nations. When you referred to the inclusion of all countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region, I am not sure whether you were referring to the regional conference — if so, if there is a special request that the Portuguese-speaking African countries, or any other countries, should specifically be invited to that meeting, we are open to that proposal. But the regional conferences are meant for the individual regions.

I mentioned the technical difficulty which arises as concerns inviting States to forward their inputs. The Secretariat's thoughts were that members of COPUOS are

already conversant with the subject areas and have a considerable amount of information already available. Thus they could respond quickly, and if their input was received by November, the Secretariat would be able to make a start on putting together the detailed elements for consideration by the Advisory Committee. However, when preparing the full report, we would by this stage have the benefit of input from all States in time for the meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

If the Committee so wishes, the Secretariat can investigate the possibility of inviting all Member States simultaneously. A reference would be included to say that it would be subject to approval by the General Assembly, but if the Committee so wishes, the Secretariat can modify its arrangements accordingly.

The final question relates to the timing of the meeting of the Advisory Committee. This Committee will meet in full session in 1998. As well as the agenda items of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in its capacity as Advisory Committee it will have before it the item on UNISPACE III on its agenda. At that point in time it will be vital to consider a more definite schedule for the Conference, as well as the specific elements for inclusion in the draft report.

In February 1999, the Advisory Committee will consider the revised draft report for the Conference. It will therefore have two opportunities to examine the draft report, and the Preparatory Committee will have one full opportunity (in 1998), and one brief final look at the report at its 1999 session. I hope this is clear.

The CHAIRMAN: I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Germany.

Mr. G. FULDA (Germany): My delegation would like further clarification on three points. The first is the sequence of meetings; the second is the series of background papers; and finally, as con-cerns those committees which will meet during the Conference.

With respect to the sequence of meetings, Dr. Jasentuliyana mentioned that COPUOS may meet immediately before UNISPACE III. Is it the unanimous opinion of the Committee that that COPUOS meeting held directly prior to the Conference would replace the ordinary meeting, or does anyone feel that there should be a separate meeting of COPUOS in 1999?

As far as the background papers are concerned, the note prepared by the Secretariat is comprehensive and all the issues mentioned are very relevant to the discussions during the Conference. However, the ten items listed do not correspond to the number of substantive items which we have on the agenda of the Conference. My delegation therefore wonders whether this might give rise to some misunderstanding: this list could be interpreted as being a second agenda, when in fact many of the items listed do not correspond to substantive agenda items. Perhaps these background papers should be focused on the substantive agenda items which have been agreed.

Finally, as concerns the number of committees meeting during UNISPACE III, could the Secretariat confirm what we have discussed, i.e. there would be a maximum of three meetings in parallel. Therefore the question of having two or three committees could be decided upon without any pressure and with no additional budgetary implications.

The CHAIRMAN: I would now like to ask Dr. Jasentuliyana to respond to these questions.

Mr. N. JASENTULIYANA (Director, Office for Outer Space Affairs; Deputy Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna): I will take the last question first. Originally we had proposed two or three substantive committees to meet during the Conference. The Secretariat will put forward a proposal on this to the Advisory Committee for final agreement. For the time being, the understanding is that only two committees will meet in parallel — but there could be two, three or four committees convened, which will be clarified once the schedule is finalized.

With regard to the proposed meeting of COPUOS in 1999, what has been agreed upon so far is that there will be a short, three-day maximum meeting of COPUOS immediately prior to the Conference itself. To give you some background information, the Secretariat had suggested that the meeting of COPUOS might take place between the February/March meeting of the Advisory Committee and UNISPACE III itself, during June or July, in order to tie up any loose ends concerning the Conference. Based on my experience of previous Conferences, I felt this might prove to be the best solution. Member States suggested holding the meeting of COPUOS immediately prior to the Conference.

Therefore as things currently stand, it is foreseen that COPUOS will meet for two or three days immediately prior to UNISPACE III. There will not be an additional meeting of COPUOS in 1999.

Concerning the background papers and the agenda items, the Secretariat felt that the agenda as it currently stands would prove rather unwieldy if a report had to be

written on each item. There are overlaps and certain duplications in the agenda, which would be difficult to organize if background papers had to be aligned to these items. Therefore we have chosen the subjects for the background papers based on the salient points and topics contained in the agenda.

In previous years, it has been customary practice at United Nations conferences for background papers to be based on the agenda of the conference, although they may not follow the agenda items as such. The Secretariat carefully weighed up the different issues and decided that this thematic approach, covering all annotations given in the agenda, would be the best approach to adopt. There is no intention to introduce new topics not contained in the agenda; and it should be borne in mind that background papers are precisely that — background information, and not the Conference document. It is the draft report of the Conference which will follow the outline of the agenda.

If the Committee so wishes, the Secretariat is open to modifying the agenda. We would however not advise that at this stage.

Mr. L. ARIZAGA (Ecuador) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: My delegation would like to thank Dr. Jasentuliyana for the explanations he has just given us, which have helped to clarify the situation. He has mentioned that sending out information and invitations to all United Nations Member States would not raise any problem, with the proviso that all arrangements would be subject to the General Assembly's adoption of the resolution on UNISPACE III.

My delegation feels sure that States will submit their inputs, as the regional preparatory conferences will provide the momentum in this respect to all States. Therefore we support the notion of the Secretariat sending letters to all United Nations Member States at the same time.

We agree with the statement by the German delegation. In comparing other documentation ith document A/AC.105/1997/CRP.4, we too found it difficult to align this with the agenda adopted by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. That agenda was the result of lengthy negotiations and truly reflects a consensus of all views expressed in the Subcommittee. At that same meeting, two approaches to the issue of international cooperation were put forward in the context of UNISPACE III. One is reflected in document A/AC.105/1997/CRP.4, whereby it would be mentioned under each specific item. The second option was to have a separate agenda item specifically devoted to existing and new mechanisms for international cooperation.

The Group of 77, which I presided over myself, devoted a considerable amount of time to this subject. Therefore my delegation feels it is appropriate to have a document specifically addressing this issue.

If we have understood correctly, in 1998 we will be given the sequence of meetings of the Committee and its Subcommittees for 1999. The main reason for the holding of a three-day meeting of COPUOS prior to the Conference is that that meeting must approve the reports of both Subcommittees, in addition to its role as the Preparatory Committee for UNISPACE III.

The CHAIRMAN: I will ask Dr. Jasentuliyana to respond to those comments.

Mr. N. JASENTULIYANA (Director, Office for Outer Space Affairs; Deputy Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna): It is quite possible to consider having a paper on item (b), which falls into three sub-topics: environment and natural resources, remote sensing; navigation ? ? ? ? ? and location; communications. Then we have item (c), on information needs and the global approach, which will be another paper; promotion of international cooperation will be another paper, and the last one will be economic and social benefits. This means the number of papers could be reduced from ten to six, and the Secretariat is certainly prepared to give some thought to the proposal that has been put forward.

The CHAIRMAN: I think discussion on this point is very timely, as all delegations have given much thought to UNISPACE III.

We will now continue with our discussion on the current agenda items. The first speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. E. ZVEDRE (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian)*: My delegation welcomes the progress achieved during the thirty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. Some thorough and intensive discussion took place, both in terms of the range of subjects discussed and the importance of decisions taken.

The Russian Federation attaches particular importance to the work of the Subcommittee on the three-year activity plan on the scientific and technical aspects of the problem of [technogenic pollution?] of

outer space. My delegation will make a separate statement on this subject in due course.

It goes without saying that the main outcome of the last session of the Subcommittee was the adoption of consensus decisions on matters relating to the convening of UNISPACE III, in particular its agenda. As a result of the work done in the Working Group of the Whole, under the leadership of Mr. Nasim Shah, a balanced agenda was agreed upon to include all aspects of international cooperation in outer space. These included the status, application and prospects for the development of space science and technology, the application of the benefits of space technology on Earth transport systems, remote sensing, commercial aspects, etc. Discussion centred on the key areas of activity in the peaceful uses of outer space in the next millennium, as well as ways and means of the practical resolution of the problems of applying space technology to help promote social and economic development.

Attention was also paid to international cooperation in the use of space and the current status of international space law. An excellent idea which was proposed was to hold an exhibition on space technology in parallel with the Conference, organized with the participation of all those concerned in the field of space, including the private sector. My delegation believes that this exhibition would arouse both interest and support in industrial circles, and would serve as an excellent public relations exercise for the promotion of space. We also support the decision that the Conference be held in the form of a special session of COPUOS. It should be held within existing budgetary limits, which means that the length of other sessions of COPUOS and its Subcommittees in 1999 would be shorter. My delegation is ready to pursue further discussions on organizational matters in order to produce the optimum and most acceptable decision.

Another important topic discussed was the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. My delegation has reported in detail to the Subcommittee on measures undertaken in Russia to ensure the safe use of such nuclear power sources. Within the framework of this programme, research was conducted on problems concerning possible collisions of nuclear power sources with space debris. A working document was presented on the problem of safety in connection with the use of nuclear power sources. Research has been carried out on the emission of primary coolant from reactors from space-based sources in the 700-1,000 km orbit spectrum, as well as my country's approach to the creation of safety systems.

My delegation also presented a report on collisions of nuclear power sources with space debris, containing results of research on the secondary coolant circuits of reactors of space-based sources as concerns collision with space debris, the process of possible formation of droplets of coolant, and an assessment of the likelihood of these actually taking place. Details were also given of the unsuccessful launch of Mars-96, with radio-isotopes on board, and full information on the safety of such energy sources based on Plutonium 238.

This year, work will be concluded on the dedicated federal programme of [ECOS .... ?], which will be financed from 1998 to 2001, and which provides for work on space-based sources to be carried out by the ministry of the Russian Federation in charge of atomic energy. Our thanks go to the United Kingdom delegation for presenting a new version of the working document on additions to the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space. Although my delegation continues to believe that at present the Principles which were adopted in 1992 do not require revision, we are ready to discuss the United Kingdom proposal with interested delegations and to share the concrete thinking of our specialists on this matter.

My delegation welcomes the Subcommittee's decision not to include the topic of the revision of the Principles on the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee at this point in time.

The statement just made has touched on some of the more problematic issues before the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its last session. There are, however, other issues which also merit attention. The exchange of information and views on space transport systems, space biology, and medicine were also of great interest. Discussion on the technical aspects of the use of the geostationary orbit demonstrated that this is an area where concerted action is needed from all space-faring nations. The seminar held under the aegis of the IAF and COSPAR was of great interest, and my delegation hopes that such events will continue to take place.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate that some very positive results were achieved at the thirty-fourth session of the Subcommittee, and call upon the Committee to approve all the decisions contained in its report.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Japan.

Mr. H. AZUMA (Japan): My delegation also expresses its satisfaction with the work carried out by the

thirty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. The Subcommittee achieved significant progress in the multi-year workplan on space debris, as well as in preparations for the holding of UNISPACE III.

My delegation is pleased to note that the Subcommittee carried out its mandated task as Advisory Committee for the Conference through the adoption of the report of the Working Group of the Whole. We support the recommendations concerning the objectives, form, venue, date, participation, provisional agenda, financial aspects and additional components of the Conference. In particular, Japan welcomes the idea that UNISPACE III will address ways and means of resolving problems concerning the Earth and its environment through the promotion of international cooperation in Earth observation activities.

Japan agrees that every effort should be made to keep the cost of the Conference within existing resources available within the Committee by limiting the duration of sessions of COPUOS and its Subcommittees in 1999. Many delegations have already mentioned that the convening of the Conference represents an innovative approach which may serve as an example for future United Nations conferences.

My delegation supports the adoption of the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, including the report of the Working Group of the Whole. At its current session the Committee should carry out its mandated task as the Preparatory Committee in order to ensure that the outcome of UNISPACE III will be as constructive and positive as possible, in order to promote international cooperation in outer space.

The CHAIRMAN: I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Argentina.

Mr. M. MACHADO (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Several delegations have already mentioned that this year marks the fortieth anniversary of the launch of Sputnik 1, and it was 20 years ago that Voyager was launched. The launching of Sputnik 1 was one of the most important events in space history in terms of space research, me delegation would like to recall some aspects of the Voyager launch.

The Voyager programme was designed in 1974, and in 1977 the first inter-planetary vehicle was launched. Now, some 20 years later, it is still operating on the outer limits of the solar system. This shows us that in the 1970s we were able to design, build and launch successfully one of the most outstanding in the history of space research. We must ask ourselves what has happened since that time and why it is that today, with all the quantum leaps which have been made in technology, we are unable to match this kind of achievement, except in very isolated cases.

Lack of resources is often put forward as an excuse. But my delegation believes that the lack of motivation, and of the pioneering spirit of adventure which characterized those early years, is the root cause. If we can rekindle that spirit and offset economic considerations by equitable international cooperation programmes, much could be done in the field of basic research in the area of space and its applications. A small example of this is the development of the Argentine Space Plan, whose achievements include the installation of a satellite aerial for Earth observation, with the assistance of the DLR of Germany. Further cooperation is foreseen in the SACC mission, which will be launched in 1999 with the participation of the United States, Brazil, Denmark, France and Spain.

In cooperation with NASA, a technological test satellite, SACC-A, is also foreseen and this will be put into orbit by the space shuttle next year. The space programme for Chagas' Disease is another example of my country's efforts, as well as projects associated with global climate change and a training programme for science and space applications. In all these activities, Argentina was not the only country involved. There is active cooperation with agencies of the United States (NASA and NOAA), CNES in France, DLR in Germany and the European Space Agency. In this way we hope to rekindle that spirit of adventure in the use of space and its applications.

The CHAIRMAN: We all hope that UNISPACE III will do precisely that: generate renewed interest in all aspects of space and its applications. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of the Philippines.

Ms. M. PADUA (Philippines): As this is the first occasion my delegation has taken the floor at this meeting, we would like to congratulate the new Bureau on its election. My delegation has always advocated the principles of rotation and equitable geographical distribution, and it is our firm hope that the new Bureau will further enhance the work of the Committee.

Concerning agenda item 9, my country looks forward to the convening of UNISPACE III. We are convinced that the Conference will strengthen global cooperation on issues pertaining to the use of outer space for peaceful purposes. We also believe that

UNISPACE III should be supported by strong political will so that participants can involve the international community in sharing information and technological know-how. We support the views expressed by other delegations that the Conference should involve experts and organizations involved in the area of outer space.

In conclusion, we would like to express our appreciation for the work carried out by the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, as well as the hope that governments will continue to support it.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your statement and for your kind words addressed to the Bureau. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Nigeria.

Mr. R. BOROFFICE (Nigeria): My delegation would like to congratulate the Expert on Space Applications, Dr. Abiodun, for his comprehensive report on the activities of the Programme on Space Applications.

Nigeria welcomes the results of deliberations at the thirty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. We believe that the preservation of the space environment for sustainable development requires collective effort from all involved. In this context, the issues of space debris and nuclear power sources in outer space are of major importance. The risk of space debris increasing in the future is very real, and therefore measures to mitigate this are needed on an urgent basis. My delegation is therefore pleased to note that the IADC carries out exchange of information on space debris research activities, and opportunities for international cooperation in this area should be promoted. We are also in favour of a working group being set up on nuclear power sources in order to reach a scientific basis for the revision of the relevant Principles.

My delegation has already informed the Committee of progress made in the establishment of the United Nations Centre for Anglophone African countries which is being hosted by Nigeria. We would like to take this opportunity to urge those anglophone African Member States of the Committee who have not yet responded to the CDA to do so as soon as possible. My Government also accords high priority to the COPINE project. A national seminar will be held during the third quarter of 1997, aimed at sensitizing both potential users and policy- and decision-makers on the benefits of this project.

We note from the report of the Expert on Space Applications that the final project document is ready for consideration by the Provisional Governing Board. This project is of vital importance to Africa as it will, to a great extent, allow participating countries access to the global information highway. My delegatin hopes that those developed countries who will be called upon to assist in the implementation of this project will make a firm commitment to this end.

Bearing in mind the work of the Programme on Space Applications, in particular its impact on developing countries, we join other speakers in urging all Member States to support this Programme so that it is able to continue to execute its projects.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Greece.

Ms. H. MICHALOQOULOU (Greece): My delegation expresses its satisfaction with the work carried out during the thirty-fourth session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, as contained in its report.

The Committee is aware that during that session of the Subcommittee, progress was achieved on the question of the establishment of a network of space science and technology education and research institutions for Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. As the title indicates, their objective is perceived to be education and research activities on space applications projects. Delegations of interested countries — Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and Turkey — have agreed to proceed with the advancement of the project through a technical study mission to all countries involved. This mission will take place during the second half of 1997 under the auspices of the Office for Outer Space Affairs, and will define the framework and modalities of this project in terms of technical requirements, design, operation mechanism and funding.

The detailed terms of reference of this study have also been agreed upon, and the final phase of the preparatory work is now in progress. Various elements which will go towards the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding have been commonly agreed and will form the basis of the future structure and functioning of the network. My delegation would like to reaffirm Greece's intention, in its capacity as holder of the chairmanship of the steering committee of the network, to spare no efforts towards increasing the pace of action to be taken on both procedural and substantive issues concerning the creation of the network.

The CHAIRMAN: I have no more delegations wishing to speak on these two agenda items. As we have some time remaining, we will now begin our consideration of agenda item 8.

Report of the Legal Subcommittee

The CHAIRMAN: The first speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of the Czech Republic.

Mr. V. KOPAL (Czech Republic): In his first intervention on behalf of my delegation, my colleague Dr. Perek has already conveyed our warmest congratulations to the new members of the Bureau, and I would like to associate myself with these good wishes.

My delegation would like to make some comments on the report of the Legal Subcommittee as well as on its future work. Thirty-five years have passed since the establishment of both Subcommittees, which held their first sessions in Geneva in 1962. The purpose of their establishment was to study and report on the issues arising from the progress of space activities. From 1962 to date, both Subcommittees have fulfilled their tasks in this respect and have produced many valuable results.

The Legal Subcommittee was instrumental in negotiating and drafting all the United Nations space treaties and sets of principles by which the present international legal regime of space activities has been created. It is thus important to maintain this outstanding record, and continue to promote the progressive development of international space law in the United Nations.

Under one particular item on its agenda, namely "Methods relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the utilization of the geostationary orbit", the Legal Subcommittee has been considering the legal aspects of aerospace objects, as well as replies of Member States to the questionnaire formulated by the working group in order to facilitate discussion on these somewhat complicated issues. The number of States which have so far replied to the questionnaire is somewhat low; the Secretariat has prepared a very useful document, entitled "Comprehensive analysis of the replies to the questionnaire on possible legal issues with regard to aerospace objects" (document A/AC.105/C.2/L.204), which has not yet received the response it deserves. My delegation feels that more Member States of COPUOS should reply to the questionnaire so that the above-mentioned analysis prepared by the Secretariat can be updated, thus enabling a more substantive discussion on this topic.

Under the same point of its agenda, for many years the Legal Subcommittee has been considering the issues relating to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the ITU. My delegation welcomes the active participation of the representative of the ITU in the consideration of this issue by the Subcommittee. For some time he has provided the Subcommittee with valuable information and advice on the technical aspects of this issue, as well as on the measures being taken by the ITU which offer practical solutions to the problems relating to this matter.

My delegation believes that substantial progress was achieved by the German delegation on this issue at the last session of the Subcommittee. They introduced a draft resolution, which included a request to the ITU and its Member States, entitled "Ensuring equitable access to the geostationary satellite orbit radiofrequency spectrum resources", which is contained in document A/AC.105/C.2/L.207/Rev.2). This initiative provided a reasonable measure to be adopted by the General Assembly on the eve of the World Radiocommunication Conference, which is expected to pave the way for further improvements in the implementation of its goals in ensuring the rational, economic and equitable utilization of the GSO. My delegation participated in the discussion on this draft resolution, and is ready to take part in further consultations on this document, possibly during the current session of the Committee.

Last year, COPUOS and its Legal Subcommittee were able to finalize the Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space which was then adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 51/122, to which the text of the Declaration was annexed. The successful conclusion of an item which had been on the Subcommittee's agenda for many years came about through the spirit of mutual understanding and compromise of all members which took part in the discussion on it. It is now vital to intensify the informal discussions on new items to be included in the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee. A number of new items have already been put forward, and a list of these items has been included in the Subcommittee's reports. The Subcommittee was able to reach a consensus at its last meeting on the first such item to be included, on the basis of the working paper submitted by the Mexican delegation (document A/AC.105/C.2/L.206/Rev.1).

This document makes it clear that consideration of this item should aim at achieving the widest and fullest adherence to the treaties relating to outer space, and that

this initiative would not lead to the reopening of substantive debate on the treaties or any proposals for their revision or amendment. My delegation concurs with this approach; however, we believe that this consideration should not only lead to a renewed appeal addressed to all Members of the United Nations to ratify and/or accede to the treaties. In addition, the real reasons why a limited number of States which have adhered so far to the treaties should be explored in greater detail. Only on the basis of such an analysis can adequate measures be taken to achieve the widest adherence possible to these space law instruments.

The topics for possible inclusion on the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee also includes a number of other items. One such item — "Review of existing norms of international law applicable to space debris" — was proposed by my delegation and enjoyed the support of several other delegations. This proposal was accompanied by a background note in which we explained the purpose of the consideration of this proposed item, including some examples of the legal issues involved. It was made abundantly clear that consideration of these questions would not lead to the drafting of new provisions but would serve to clarify the issues involved and help to improve the interpretation and application of existing norms of international space law. My delegation believes that this method of considering the issue would be in harmony with the purpose and objective of the new item already adopted.

During the recent session of the Subcommittee my delegation reiterated its proposal, and suggested retaining the subject on the list of items for possible inclusion on the agenda of the Subcommittee in the future. We therefore appreciate that in the Chairman's package proposal, which has been adopted by the Committee by consensus, the review of existing norms of international law applicable to space debris was explicitly mentioned as one of the items to be given consideration for possible inclusion on the agenda of the Subcommittee. During our discussion this morning, appreciation was expressed for the progress achieved in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and its expert group, under the able guidance of its Chairman, Professor Dietrich Rex. This progress has been made possible by the workplan followed by these bodies.

My delegation shares in this appreciation of this progress and wishes the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee every success in fulfilling its task in accordance with the workplan. The report on space debris which was elaborated in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee will form a valuable basis for the eventual consideration of the legal aspects of space debris in the Legal Subcommittee.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on a subject which formerly fell under consideration of agenda item 7: the report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. As to its substance, my comment is also relevant from the legal point of view, which is why I would like to refer to it now in the context of our present discussion. As concerns the organization of UNISPACE III, my delegation welcomes the document prepared by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (document A/AC.105/672), which has established the promotion of international cooperation as well as economic and societal benefits as substantive items for discussion by the Conference. A review of the current status of the law of outer space, including ways and means of promoting wider adherence to the existing international space treaties and principles, has been explicitly mentioned. Workshops and/or seminars are also foreseen, one of them relating in particular to space law. My delegations feels that this is a positive direction in which to move ahead, as legal aspects form an inseparable part of both present and future issues relating to space activities. They were discussed at the first United Nations conference on outer space, held in Vienna in 1968, and UNISPACE III should continue the tradition.

The CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your detailed statement and for your kind words addressed to the Bureau. The next speaker on my list is the distinguished representative of Italy.

Ms. G. VENTURINI (Italy): The thirty-sixth session of the Legal Subcommittee made significant progress in agreeing on recommending a new agenda item entitled "Review of the status of the five international treaties governing outer space" should be included in its agenda, starting with its thirty-seventh session in 1998. This new item fully reflects the interests of all members of COPUOS, and the juridical expertise of the Legal Subcommittee will be positively exercised in examining the status of the legal disciplines, in whose elaboration it made a substantial contribution. On the thirtieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Outer Space Treaty, the Subcommittee was given new input to match the evolving changes in space affairs, and to give new responses in the field of space law.

As concerns the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, we would like to urge the Committee to consider that this item has been on the Subcommittee's agenda for many years, without producing substantive

results. My delegation believes that the ITU is the proper forum where matters related to the use of the geostationary orbit are dealt with. The working paper introduced by Germany at the last session of the Subcommittee requested the ITU and its Member States to intensify their efforts to ensure and improve equitable access to the geostationary satellite orbit. My delegation believes this document could provide an excellent means to conclude the consideration of this issue in the Subcommittee.

The CHAIRMAN: Are there any delegations wishing to speak on this agenda item, or on any other agenda items? I see none; I will therefore reluctantly adjourn this meeting of the Committee. Before doing so I would like to remind delegations about our schedule of work for tomorrow. We will continue our joint consideration of items 7 and 9, as well as of item 8. We may also begin our consideration of the remaining agenda items.

I understand that the Asian Group is meeting at 9.30 a.m. tomorrow in this room, and therefore our meeting will start at 10.30 a.m. tomorrow instead of 10 a.m. I now give the floor to the distinguished representative of Brazil.

Mr. S. CALDAS MERCADOR (Brazil): On a point of order, tomorrow at 2 p.m. the G.77 will be holding a meeting to discuss agenda items of the next IAEA Board of Governors meeting. If some provision could be made to start our afternoon plenary at 3.30 p.m., that would be greatly appreciated.

The CHAIRMAN: We will bear this in mind and take a decision at the end of tomorrow morning's meeting. The Committee is now adjourned until 10.30 a.m. tomorrow.

The sitting adjourned at 5.10 p.m.